

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8662

INFO AMEMBASSY CARACAS

AMEMBASSY LIMA

AMEMBASSY QUITO

AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

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EO 11652: NA

TAGS: SHUM, PINT, BL

SUBJ: GOB ANNOUNCES LIMITED POLITICAL AMNESTY

1. SUMMARY: GOB ANNOUNCED DECEMBER 21 AMNESTY OF 284 POLITICAL EXILES AND RELEASE OR TRANSFER FOR TRIAL OF ALL 52 POLITICAL PRISONERS UNDER DETENTION IN BOLIVIA. AMNESTY INCLUDES FORMER PRESIDENTS PAZ ESTENSSORO AND OVANDO BUT EXCLUDES FORMER PRESIDENT SILES ZUAZO AND FORMER VICE PRESIDENT JUAN LECHINE, LONGTIME LEADER OF THE MINEWORKERS. AMNESTY WAS MORE LIMITED THAN EXPECTED AND HAS ALREADY DRAWN HEAVY CRITICISM. END SUMMARY.

2. MINISTER OF INTERIOR GUILLERMO JIMENEZ GALLO ANNOUNCED DECEMBER 21 AN AMNESTY FOR POLITICAL EXILES BY ISSUING A LIST OF 348 BOLIVIANS WHO WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO RETURN TO BOLIVIA. JIMENEZ STATED THAT ALL EXILES NOT ON THE LIST, A TOTAL OF 284 BY THE GOB'S COUNT, WILL BE ALLOWED TO RETURN. THIS WOULD INCLUDE FORMER PRESIDENTS VICTOR PAZ ESTENSSORO AND ALFREDO OVANDO CANDIA, MNR LEADER

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CIRO HUMBOLT (ALREADY BACK IN BOLIVIA), AND PRA LEADER WALTER GUEVARA. HOWEVER, AMONG THE 348 BOLIVIANS SPECIFICALLY BARRED FROM RETURNING ARE FORMER PRESIDENT HERNAN SILES ZUAZO, WHO HAS BEEN WIDELY MENTIONED AS A PROBABLE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE IN THE UPCOMING ELECTIONS; JUAN LECHIN OQUENDO, LONGTIME LEADER OF THE MINEWORKERS, FORMER VICE PRESIDENT UNDER PAZ AND THE CURRENT LEADER OF

THE PRIN; VICTOR LOPEZ ARIAS, THE LAST LEADER OF THE NOW
ILLEGAL MINeworkers' FEDERATION AND A LECHIN PROTEGE;
GENERAL LUIS REQUE TERAN, COMMANDING GENERAL OF THE ARMY
UNDER PRESIDENT TORRES; CLAUDIO SAN ROMAN, HEAD OF THE SECRET
POLICE UNDER PAZ; CARLOS VALVERDE BARBERY, A FALANGE DISSIDENT;
AND EMMA OBLEAS, THE WIDOW OF FORMER PRESIDENT TORRES.

3. THE 348 PEOPLE ON THE GOB LIST WILL NOT BE ALLOWED TO
RETURN, SAID JIMENEZ, BECAUSE THEY ARE GUILTY OF "PARTICIPATION
IN GUERRILLA ACTIVITY, KIDNAPPINGS, ARMED ASSAULT, ACTS OF
TERRORISM AND VIOLENCE AS A MEANS OF FIGHTING AGAINST THE
PEACE AND TRANQUILITY OF THE NATION..." JIMENEZ ADDED THAT
THOSE NOT ON THE PROSCRIBED LIST SHOULD APPLY TO THE NEAREST
BOLIVIAN CONSULATE FOR A REENTRY VISA.

4. JIMENEZ ALSO ANNOUNCED THAT 19 OF THE 52 POLITICAL PRISONERS
NOW IN CUSTODY WILL BE REMANDED FOR TRIAL AND THE OTHER 33
WILL BE RELEASED. (THE EMBASSY HAS BEEN TOLD THAT SOME OF
THE 33 ARE BEING RELEASED ON CONDITION THEY GO INTO
"VOLUNTARY EXILE".)

5. ACCORDING TO DAILY NEWSPAPER "PRESENCIA" JIMENEZ THEN
LASHED OUT AT THE PERMANENT ASSEMBLY ON HUMAN RIGHTS (PAHR)
AND AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL FOR CLAIMING THAT 19,000 BOLIVIANS
HAVE GONE INTO EXILE IN THE SIX YEARS OF THE BANZER ADMINISTRATION.
(THE FIGURE OF 19,000 ACCORDING TO A PAHR SOURCE, INCLUDES
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THOSE WHO HAVE LEFT OF THEIR OWN VOLITION AND DEPENDENTS.)
JIMENEZ REAFFIRMED THAT THERE ARE ONLY 632 EXILES AND ADDED,
"IF THERE ARE 19,000 EXILES, EXCEPT FOR THIS SMALL GROUP
THAT IS EXCLUDED, THE OTHER 18,700 CAN NOW RETURN."

6. THE PAHR ISSUED A STATEMENT DECEMBER 22 CRITICIZING
THE AMNESTY AS "NIGGARDLY" AND AFFIRMING THAT THE LIST ONLY
COVERS A FEW NAMES WHEREAS IT IS KNOWN THAT THE NUMBER OF
EXILES RUNS INTO THE THOUSANDS. THE PAHR ALSO STATED THAT THE
MAJORITY OF THE 19 POLITICAL PRISONERS NOW BEING TURNED OVER TO
THE COURTS HAVE BEEN INCARCERATED FOR TWO YEARS AND IT IS
CURIOUS THAT ONLY NOW HAS THE GOB FOUND CAUSE TO RECLASSIFY
THEM FROM POLITICAL PRISONERS TO ORDINARY CRIMINALS.
THE ASSEMBLY "LAMENTS THAT THE AMNESTY...IS SO LIMITED AND
NIGGARDLY THAT IT DOES NOT MERIT THE NAME OF AMNESTY." IT
CONTINUED THAT "THE MOST SERIOUS CONCLUSION FROM THIS
GOVERNMENTAL DECISION IS THAT THE ANNOUNCED ELECTIONS CANNOT
BE REALIZED IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF DEMOCRACY AND PARTICIPATION
BECAUSE WITHOUT THEIR LEADERS THE POLITICAL PARTIES AND THE
POPLULAR ORGANIZATIONS WILL NOT BE ABLE TO OFFER AN
ALTERNATIVE TO THE BOLIVIAN PEOPLE AGAINST THE OFFICIAL
CANDIDATE ALREADY ANNOUNCED."

7. COMMENT: THE LARGE NUMBER OF BOLIVIANS NOT INCLUDED IN THE AMNESTY IS SOMEWHAT SURPRISING, BUT PARTICULARLY SERIOUS, AS SUGGESTED BY THE PAHR STATEMENT, IS THE OMISSION FROM THE AMNESTY OF HERNAN SILES ZUAZO, WIDELY MENTIONED AS THE MOST LIKELY OPPOSITION CADIDATE TO THE "OFFICIAL" CANDIDATE. WHILE THE EMBASSY HAS BEEN TOLD EARLIER THAT THE AMNESTY WOULD BE ANNOUNCED IN TWO OR THREE PHASES, THE WORDING OF THE GOVERNMENT DECREE APPEARS TO BE DEFINITIVE. THE AMNESTY WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE WIDELY DENOUNCED AS INADEQUATE AND THERE WILL BE HEAVY PRESSURE ON THE GOB TO EXPAND IT. IF SILES IS NOT ALLOWED TO RETURN, IT WILL THROW A HEAVY SHADOW OVER THE LEGITIMACY OF THE JULY ELECTIONS. END COMMENT.

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8. FULL LIST OF 348 BOLIVIANS EXCLUDED FROM AMNESTY BEING POUCHED TO DEPARTMENT.
BOEKER

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